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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: AL-HAKIM IDENTIFIES PROGRESS, OBSTACLES TO
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Classified By: POLCOUNS MATT TUELLER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a November 11 talk with Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Iraq and Afghanistan Brett McGurk, ISCI defacto leader Ammar al-Hakim identified recent positive developments but cautioned that true reconciliation required more political progress. He expressed concern over Turkey's intentions in Iraq, discussed ISCI's efforts to bring the Sadrists into the political process, said Iran wanted to resume its dialogue with the US, and complained over ISCI/Badr prisoners in American custody. McGurk said the goal of his visit to Baghdad was to finalize a declaration of principles to frame a long-term relationship between the United States and Iraq. He also wished to discuss with Hakim recent reconciliation efforts, the relationship between ISCI and the United States, and the prospect for an emerging national vision based on principles of federalism and division of authority between Baghdad and the provinces. End Summary.

Reconciliation and the Declaration of Principles

¶2. (C) In his introductory remarks Hakim identified several recent positive developments, including indications armed groups are willing to participate in politics and increased revenue from the rising price of oil. While acknowledging recent progress on reconciliation, Hakim said more political progress was needed and criticized political leaders for acting based on personal rather than national interests. "Reconciliation is more than just agreements and signatures on paper, but continuous contact and relations between parties," he added. Hakim said the ideal division of powers between the provincial and central government was still unclear and that Iraq could learn from the experiences of other countries governed by a federal system, especially the US.

¶3. (C) McGurk said the goal of his visit was to complete a Declaration of Principles by November 20 to form a long-term relationship between Iraq and the United States. Such a declaration, he explained, will define a common vision for both countries and send an important signal to the region. Hakim expressed his strong support for a long-term relationship between Iraq and the United States and noted past public speeches of his on the importance of the relationship, including a sermon during the Eid holiday. McGurk expressed appreciation for Hakim's grassroots reconciliation efforts with Shaykh Ahmed al-Rishawi, noting they serve as an example for Iraq's national leadership.

Concerns over Turkey

¶4. (C) Hakim expressed concern over tension with Turkey, saying some statements by Turkish officials suggested Turkey's goals extended beyond operations against the PKK. He added though that KRG officials are increasingly willing

to listen to Iraqis encouraging moderation. McGurk identified three steps to resolving the current crises: 1) KRG actions against the PKK, 2) Reinstatement of the trilateral process with the US, Iraq, and Turkey; and 3) A longer term solution possibly including an amnesty offer to PKK and fighters and the return of refugees. McGurk said the first step was critical to moving to the second and third phases and urged ISCI to reinforce the message that the KRG must move against the PKK.

Bringing in the Sadrists

15. (C) Turning to the subject of the Sadr movement, Hakim said ISCI is gradually convincing the Sadrists to trust in political institutions. Hakim mentioned the agreement signed between ISCI and the Sadr Trend and said the two sides continued to hold regular talks. He said that in the beginning the Sadrists believed their members were unfairly targeted in raids and police actions. According to Hakim, ISCI responded by explaining there was a choice between a government of law and a government of militias, and any person acting against the law needed to be punished. The best way to reconcile political differences, he said, is to present arguments to the people and let them decide through voting.

Iran ready to talk

16. (C) Hakim speculated that Iranian influence was responsible for the recent decrease of violence and Sadr's declaration of a 'freeze' on JAM. He said Iran was anxious to continue its dialogue with the US but was disappointed in

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the most recent round of talks. Hakim explained that Iran brought many technical experts in expectation of substantive talks but found the agenda limited and thought the US "was not serious" about the negotiations. He added that this was Iran's view and did not know whether it was correct. He concluded by saying that no one wished for war and joked that "the Great Satan and the Axis of Evil should resolve their affairs outside of Iraq's borders." McGurk said Iran has a strategic choice to make and that it must stop its lethal activities in Iraq. This was the message from the first round of talks, explained McGurk, adding that Iran knows what it must do to set the conditions for more constructive talks on the situation in Iraq. McGurk acknowledged that Iranian-sponsored violence against the Coalition and Iraqis appears to have decreased in recent weeks but added that this trend must continue. Hakim said that he and other ISCI leaders have repeatedly and consistently sent this same message to Tehran.

Unlocking a National Vision

17. (C) McGurk asked about an emerging consensus on the principles of federalism, noting views on the issue have evolved since 2004, when neither the Sunni or any Shi'a parties, including ISCI, supported federalism. Hakim responded that the Sunnis, particularly in Anbar, are indeed beginning to see federalism's benefits to their community. He noted that although federalism is a system designed to benefit minorities, Iraq's minorities have long opposed the concept. Hakim added that Sunnis are beginning to support federalism as the proper model for Iraq and noted that grassroots efforts in Ramadi and Karbala might soon lead to a national conference in which the same principles can be discussed on a broader level. McGurk said the United States supports this important conversation and hopes it will lead to a national consensus among political leaders on the division of authority between the central, provincial, and regional governments. Such a consensus, McGurk concluded, could help unlock a number of key reconciliation issues.

Embarrassment over ISCI prisoners

18. (C) Both parties agreed on the importance of a strong ISCI-US relationship. Hakim noted a lack of trust that has existed and raised the issue of ISCI/Badr prisoners in American custody. He complained that ISCI never saw any credible evidence to support their detention and that many were arrested based on "false reports." Hakim promised ISCI would support the imprisonment of any suspects directly linked to crimes and suggested turning over the cases to the Iraqi judicial system. He added that the issue had been raised in many high-level meetings and called the lack of any resolution "embarrassing" to the ISCI leadership. Hakim noted the pace of engagement between ISCI and US officials in Baghdad had slowed and expressed hope that regular meetings would resume in the near future. McGurk mentioned the reciprocal relationship between ISCI and the US and urged Hakim to cooperate closely with the US in combating lethal aid networks in the south. He agreed to raise the detainee issue at the appropriate channels.

Comment

9 (C) Hakim is a charismatic and energetic young leader and poised to take the helm of ISCI from his ailing father, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim. His impact will likely be greater than his father's and we should cultivate his talents, as one of many emerging transitional leaders, to advance our long-term interests in Iraq. Hakim's outreach to the Anbar Awakening and his vocal support for a long-term relationship between Iraq and the US indicate his potential as a leader whose interests are generally aligned with our own. End Comment.
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